

21.03 MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW

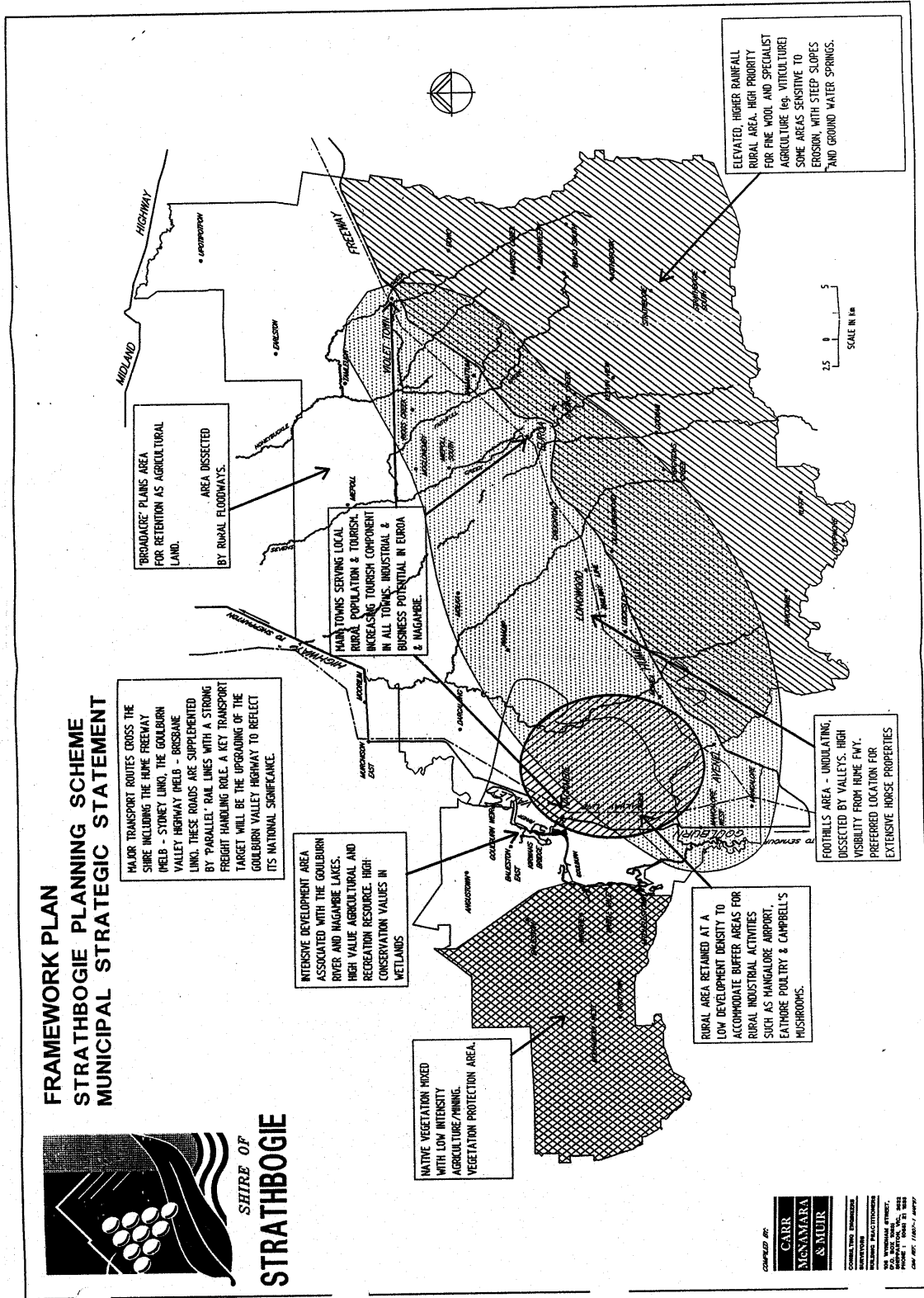
INTRODUCTION

Strathbogie Shire has an area of 3,304 square kilometres. It is predominantly a rural municipality that is strongly reliant upon agriculture as its economic base. The traditional base is diversifying with new agricultural pursuits and tourism creating growth opportunities. The Shire includes significant natural features and rural landscapes, together with a range of rural service towns and village settlements rather than a dominant urban centre.

The Shire contains four major land units:

- The granite country of the Strathbogie Ranges and foothill areas with rolling landscapes to the south and south-east
- Cleared grasslands and woodlands to the north and north-east
- Box-ironbark open forests in the western sector of the Shire particularly around Graytown
- A series of alluvial plains characterised by river flats with deep alluvial soil.
- These four major land units form the basis of the Shire's Framework Plan. The Framework Plan provides an overview of the Municipality, its agricultural attributes, major transport routes and provides the guidance for future development in the Shire.
- To facilitate effective land management practices and infrastructure provisions the Framework Plan provides the strategic basis against which development and subdivision in the Shire will be assessed.

Framework Plan



POPULATION

The Shire's estimated population at the end of 1998 was 9,285 persons. The population has increased by about 650 persons over the last ten years largely due to ready access to and from Melbourne. This increase has been mostly at Nagambie and Avenel and in the Shire's rural areas principally the southern portion of the Shire and the Strathbogies Ranges.

Some 45% of the Shire's population live in its two largest towns - Euroa and Nagambie. Euroa contains the local government administrative centre for the Shire. There are several smaller rural service towns, including Violet Town, Avenel, Longwood, Ruffy, Graytown and Strathbogies. All towns and village settlements act as important local service centres and with a range of community facilities provide a focal point for their surrounding rural areas.

The Shire's population profile is generally consistent with rural trends within the north east region. Population gain is occurring predominantly in the over 30 years age group, whilst the number of teenagers and young adults is declining. This is linked to the lack of tertiary educational facilities in the Shire and employment opportunities.

Household size in the Shire is expected to continue to decline from 2.6 people per dwelling to 2.25 people per dwelling in the year 2021. The average household size is smaller than regional Victoria and reflects the aging population and loss of youth from the Shire. The aged population is 2 percent above the State average. The Council provides services to its aged population through residential aged care and community based home care services.

It is expected that Strathbogies Shire will continue to attract a population growth rate of around 1% per annum over the next 10-15 years. The major urban centres of Euroa and Nagambie have reticulated water and sewerage services and are capable of supporting more people.

SETTLEMENTS

The Shire's settlements provide a network of rural service towns for the immediate needs of the municipality's residents. The relatively small size of these towns means there is a strong reliance on surrounding regional centres for higher order goods and services. The following table summarises the key roles, attributes, planning issues, development opportunities and population changes of the major settlements.

Larger Towns

Town	Role	Population Change		Percentage Change
		1986 - 1996	1986 - 1996	1986 - 1996
Euroa	Supports an active retail area, livestock saleyards and rural service industries. Employment opportunities in industry, retailing and tourism including heritage features of the town. Range of in-fill, low density and rural residential development options available but is subject to some flooding constraints.	2730	2697	-1.2
Nagambie.	Principal urban centre in southern half of the Shire. Services surrounding rural areas. Supports agribusiness and tourism. Future potential for residential growth based on employment opportunities in specialist agriculture ventures, improved access to	1099	1335	+21.47

	Melbourne, retirement focus and tourism development particularly associated with the Lake.		
Violet Town.	Traditional rural service centre in northern part of Shire offering village lifestyle opportunities. Earliest surveyed inland town in Victoria with a number of historic places and opportunities in tourism. Requires introduction of sewerage scheme (to be implemented in 2001) and upgrading of retail and open space areas to promote residential development. Constrained by flooding.	594	580
Avenel.	Small village built around a square with strong historic links to early Victoria. Location in southern part of Shire provides opportunities for low density residential development given its access to Seymour and Melbourne. Constrained by flooding and lack of other service infrastructure (a sewerage scheme is to be implemented in the next two years).	487	546
			-2.3
			+12.1

Rural Settlements

Longwood	Small rural community located between Avenel and Euroa. Centre of high investment in the thoroughbred horse industry. Provides recreation and sporting facilities to surrounding rural areas. Moderate potential for low density residential development. Constrained by lack of infrastructure and services.
Ruffy	Small rural residential settlement in southern part of Strathbogie Ranges. Area supports cattle, wool and wine grape industries. Some developing industry in fruit, berry, olive and herbs. Area in transition from rural district to village settlement. Constrained by lack of infrastructure and services.
Graytown	Historic settlement established as a mining area during mid nineteenth Century. Small agricultural based community with opportunities in wine production and tourism. Constrained by lack of infrastructure and services.
Strathbogie	Small picturesque historic village in Strathbogie Ranges plateau. Linked to wool and timber industries with potential to expand viticulture and tourism. Improvements to reticulated water supply have provided potential for residential opportunities and tourism.

An analysis of the lots in each of the towns indicates the following supply. It should be noted that similar to most rural towns considerable areas of land are held by owners with no intention of developing the land, or the cost of development is prohibitive against the likely financial returns. The assessment of the realistic long term lot supply has been assisted by

determining the number of lots within the area serviced by reticulated water and, where available, sewerage.

The towns of Avenel, Longwood and Violet Town have reticulated water systems. Sewerage schemes are to be implemented for Violet Town and Avenel. It is expected that these towns will predominantly provide for low density living opportunities with some additional urban development when sewerage systems have been made available. Future residential development will be supported in those towns where reticulated services are provided and the road infrastructure is developed.

Town	Approximate Area of Vacant Land Zoned Residential (Ha)
Euroa	51.43
Nagambie	77.04
Violet Town	68.03
Avenel	71.05

Not all the areas are conducive to development due to drainage constraints. This should not preclude the identification of more suitable sites for residential lots and the inclusion of land as low density rural allotments on the edge of townships.

Together with the Shires of Murrindindi and Delatite, the Shire had the third highest percentage of vacant dwellings in the region on census night (1996). This is a result of absentee landowners who use the Shire as a weekend or holiday destination.

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Shire is serviced by excellent interstate and regional transport links including two national highway routes – the Hume Freeway and the Goulburn Valley Highway. The North-Eastern Railway from Melbourne to Sydney and the Melbourne to Shepparton Railway Line also service the Shire. These road and rail routes provide important links for passenger and freight movement.

Shire residents use the passenger services on both rail lines. The opportunity exists for local passenger services between towns in the Shire and larger centres outside. The Tocomwal railway line, which passes through Nagambie, is a major freight line for produce from the irrigation areas and Riverina to Melbourne for distribution or export. Bulk fertiliser is transported back for distribution to the crop growers along the same line.

Improvements to the road network such as those currently under way for the Goulburn Valley Highway are important for the ongoing prosperity of the Shire and the broader region. The improvements to this major highway will ensure better access to larger centres and markets as the Goulburn Valley Highway forms part of the National Highway linking Melbourne and Brisbane. It will also provide a safer and less congested travel to larger centres like Shepparton from Melbourne.

The Shire's strategic location on major national transport routes also provides an opportunity for the location of road freight distribution businesses to obtain convenient access to national and international markets.

The Hume Freeway, and the Goulburn Valley Highway are principal roads linking State capital cities and are designated National Highways under the *Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988*. Land use planning needs to take full account of these highways when development occurs in their vicinity through setback requirements, proposed location and accessibility of any new roads and the appearance of the built form.

The Shire has an extensive rural road network. Upgrading roads for developments, particularly in remote areas, will need to be based on developer contributions. Development will be encouraged along sealed roads or roads that are regularly maintained by Council.

Mangalore is a significant regional airport, with the capacity to support an increased level of air freight. The Mangalore Airport is located in the southern portion of the Shire, between the Hume freeway and the Goulburn Valley Highway. It provides for air-freight, light aircraft traffic and military traffic associated with the Puckapunyal Army Base, located outside the Shire near Seymour. Further potential exists to expand the capacity of this facility to cater for increased tourism travel and freight by including specialised residential accommodation at the Airport itself. Recreational pursuits in gliding are available at Loxsely, sky diving at Nagambie and Euroa and hot air ballooning at Longwood.

The level of infrastructure available for each town depends on its size. For example only towns of 500+ are being sewered. Similarly, gas reticulation is determined by the number of customers and the volume of demand. Euroa is currently the only town with a reticulated gas supply.

Euroa and Nagambie have reticulated water and sewerage, however, the growth of these towns will require augmentation of their existing sewerage treatment plants. Avenel and Violet Town are scheduled to be sewered by the year 2001 which will allow growth and improved water quality in surrounding waterways. Currently there is sufficient infrastructure in place to provide quality water to serve the population and industry needs of the Shire.

Individual effluent disposal systems are used elsewhere in the Shire. The Shire is working with the Environment Protection Authority and Environmental Health Officers to provide new and improved effluent disposal systems for unsewered areas. This is particularly important to allow future development along major waterways such as the Goulburn River, Lake Nagambie and Goulburn Weir.

The Goulburn Weir at Nagambie is a significant irrigation structure in the region. The Weir diverts water from the Goulburn River to channels that carry water east to irrigation areas around Shepparton and west to the Mallee region, via the Waranga Basin.

The towns and their surrounding rural areas are serviced by hospitals with Euroa, Nagambie and Violet Town each having a hospital with medical emergency facilities. Council has recently completed a Health Needs Study for the Shire which will see the amalgamation of the Euroa, Nagambie and Violet Hospitals and the Euroville Aged Care Hostel. The amalgamation of these centres will provide an integrated health service across the Shire and the ongoing viability of the services.

Each of the towns and villages has a primary school and Euroa has a secondary college.

AGRICULTURE AND PRIMARY INDUSTRY

Agriculture and land based industries, primarily cropping, sheep and cattle, horses and vineyards are the economic base of the Shire. In 1994 there were 1,165 businesses in the Shire, of which, 72% (843 businesses) were associated with agriculture. The value of agricultural production from the Shire is estimated to be more than \$40 million.

In recent years, significant industrial activity has occurred in rural areas. Examples include composting for mushroom growing, poultry production, wineries and associated bottling plant. The Shire has also become increasingly attractive to the equine industry, agribusiness (including hydroponics) and home-based businesses.

Softwood plantations are located on the northern boundary of the Shire. Plantation timber production on private and public land across the Shire is increasing and is expected to provide employment and economic opportunities. This development will need to be carefully managed in sensitive environments and landscape features such as on the Strathbogrie Plateau.

Approximately 70% of the total agricultural production within the Shire derives from sheep and cattle. The extensive broad-acre plains to the north have been traditional sheep and cattle areas but with the current downturn in the wool market areas of land are being used to diversify into crop production. The Strathbogies Ranges has also prided itself on its fine wool production. Council will seek to assist the existing agricultural base by promoting and facilitating value adding processes to ensure that traditional primary production remains viable.

The other 30% is based on a diversity of activities with new and emerging agricultural pursuits which are contributing significantly to the local economy. Emerging industries include wine production, the equine industry and intensive agriculture eg. herb production (These activities are occurring predominantly in the Nagambie and Avenel areas). It is estimated that the area planted for viticulture has increased by more than 150% over the past four years. This trend has seen large areas planted for premium wine grape production in the Strathbogies Ranges and along the Goulburn River around Nagambie.

Employment in agricultural activities has declined about 10% during the 1986-1996 period despite the substantial investment in agribusiness activities such as vineyards, wineries, horse properties and intensive horticulture.

Council is committed to protecting high quality agricultural land and will seek to strengthen and diversify the agricultural base by promoting alternative industries including equine, intensive pig and poultry units, forestry and viticulture particularly where these provide for locally based value adding.

Potential conflicts of land use can occur where residential type activities locate adjacent to agricultural activities. The conflict can be due to complaints regarding spray drifts, odour, chemicals, dust caused by cultivation etc.

In some cases rural industries require extensive buffer areas and these need to be planned for. A broad band to the west of the Hume Freeway east and north east of Nagambie has been identified as suitable for promoting this type of activity. The area already contains some uses which require buffers, that need to be protected from the encroachment of dwellings. As there is continuing interest in further investment in this type of land use, and the area contains extensive land holdings and very few residences, dwellings and small lot subdivisions in this area will be discouraged to support further uses which require buffers.

The Shire continues to experience demand for development of dwellings in attractive rural environments and this has been a significant component of the Shire's recent population growth. This style of development is seen as being feasible when associated with investment in agricultural activities and does not compromise the natural resource base and impact on existing agricultural operations. The standard of existing and proposed infrastructure, particularly roads, must be taken into consideration when considering this style of development.

Significant stone resources are located within the Shire, particularly at Tubbs and Creighton's Hills.

The four major land units referred to in the Municipal Overview form the basis of the Shire's Framework Plan. The Framework Plan highlights the location and types of agricultural pursuits in the major areas. To reinforce Council's commitment to its agricultural areas and avoid conflicts in land use, rural land within the Shire has been retained at a low development density.

TOURISM

Tourism is a prime growth sector offering opportunities for economic growth and employment. The Shire's major product strengths in tourism are agriculture, sports events, aerial and aquatic activities and award winning wineries.

Ideally located one hour from Melbourne's northern fringes, the Shire is strategically placed to attract travelers on two of Victoria's main road thoroughfares, namely the Hume Freeway (M31) and the Goulburn Valley Highway (A39). The major rail transport route

between Melbourne and Sydney also provides the opportunity for tourism along with secondary lines between major regional centres.

As part of the Goulburn Murray Waters Product Region the Shire is well placed as a major tourist destination. Being a strong marketing Region, promotional tools include a motivational brochure, packages brochure, touring map and access to promotional direct marketing and tourism expos and shows. The shire has two product brochures titled, Strathbogies Ranges and Nagambie Lakes. In addressing our optimum marketing advantages specific product branding areas have been identified namely Nagambie Lakes, Tenerife Country and Strathbogies Ranges.

The scenic landscape appeal of the Strathbogies Ranges Tourism Route, together with the Shire's heritage attractions offers visitors a choice of touring.

There are a number of wineries in the Shire which attract many visitors, one being the well known Mitchellton Winery, positioned on the banks of the Goulburn River, which hosts conferences and cultural events. Chateau Tahbilk, is another important historic winery. Wineries can be accessed through the Nagambie Lake system by the Goulburn River Cruiser. Hire boats are also available. The development of new vineyards providing cellar door sales will assist in strengthening Winery Tourism visitation. The Shire's well sign posted winery trail highlights the renowned Mitchellton and historic Chateau Tahbilk as well as numerous fine boutique wineries.

Aerial pursuits, such as air ballooning, gliding, skydiving and helicopter flights are increasing in popularity. The Shire is being marketed as the 'Aerial Pursuit Centre of Victoria', offering enthusiasts a variety of aerial activities. (These activities are located throughout the Shire at Mangalore, Euroa, Locksley, Longwood and Nagambie).

Sports events and festivals include:

- Avenel Farmers Market
- Canoeing Championships
- Longwood Horse Festival – Carriage Driving
- Mangalore Airshow
- Rowing Championships and Regattas
- Shiraz Challenge
- Speedway Endurance and Bash
- Vintage Festival
- Violet Town Crafts Market
- Water ski events
- Wool Week including World Wide Wool, Home and Garden Expo

The rowing/canoeing facility at Lake Nagambie offers potential to attract both major and minor events, which is expected to grow and create an increased demand for accommodation and commercial development through the major rowing events and training camps.

Accommodation facilities throughout the Shire include motels, hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation, farmstay accommodation and cottages. The area also boasts a large conference/convention facility that caters for up to 150 participants. There is an opportunity to development larger convention facilities to provide a central location for the North East and Melbourne.

The Shire provides visitor information through the Level 1 Accredited Nagambie Lakes Visitor Information Centre. Visitor information is also available via satellite information outlets at Avenel, Violet Town, Strathbogies and in Euroa at the Farmers Arms Museum, Caltex Service Station and at the BP Service Station in Euroa. A central Shire wide Accommodation Bookings Network, is located at the Nagambie Lakes Visitor Information Centre. Information Boards are located in the Shire's main townships, providing visitors with 24 hour access to location maps, township direction and emergency contacts.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The Shire has the highest proportion of people employed in agriculture and forestry in the north east region. The agricultural production of Euroa, Nagambie and Violet Town districts is estimated to be valued at more than \$40 million (based on Agriculture Victoria Report 1995). With the amount of agricultural production the Shire's aim is to add value to its primary produce and promote new agricultural pursuits and industries. An example of this is the recent large scale investment in a winery and bottling plant designed to source fruit, process wine and bottle the product all within the municipality. This trend within the Shire is strongly supported by Council.

The Shire has a relatively small percentage of its workforce employed in retail trade in comparison to the region. This reflects the competition from the commercial areas in the major regional centres of Shepparton, Benalla and Seymour.

Other important employment sectors include the construction, health and community services and transport related industries. There is an opportunity to capitalise further on transport related industries with the development of new businesses and the strategic location of the Shire on the major road and rail networks.

Significant industrial areas in the Shire are located at Euroa and Nagambie. The Euroa industrial estate to the west of town comprises approximately 13 hectares of fully serviced land. In Nagambie the industrial area is situated to the east of the main residential area adjoining the Melbourne/Shepparton railway line. Most of the sites are occupied but future demand can be met north of the existing industrial area where the land is elevated and well-drained.

There is demand in Euroa for a supply of larger industrial lots closer to the Hume Freeway to cater for industries that need large sites, buffer zones and access to the Freeway. These areas would be utilised for primary production processing similar to the wine production plants developed near Nagambie on the Goulburn Valley Highway.

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Catchment

The Shire is located within the Goulburn Broken Catchment which is part of the Murray Darling Basin. The Goulburn River, classified as a Heritage River, flows through the Shire and is dammed at Goulburn Weir forming the shallow water pondage of Lake Nagambie. It is a major recreational and conservation resource for the Shire. This catchment area drains west from the Ranges to the Goulburn Valley.

There are many streams within the Shire providing water for stock to domestic water supplies, irrigation and recreation purposes. Many of the streams have their source in natural springs located high in the Strathbogie Ranges. These systems include the Sevens Creek (Euroa), Honeysuckle Creek (Violet Town), Mountain Hut Creek (Euroa), Nine Mile Creek (Longwood) Creightons Creek, Hughes Creek, Faithfulls Creek and Castle Creek.

The health of our catchment has important social and economic benefits not only to local communities but to the State and the Nation through the provision of high quality water for downstream users.

With the increase in alternative agricultural activities, such as viticulture, demand will be placed on the catchment to supply water for irrigation purposes. Policy has been developed to ensure that streamflow management plans are prepared prior to the construction of any large scale dams in the catchment areas of the Strathbogie Ranges and Tarcombe.

To protect water quality in the catchment nutrient management, land degradation and vegetation loss must be prevented. The Shire also has pockets of land with high water tables and salinity, especially where the Broken River Highlands meet the Goulburn Plains.

Land is particularly subject to erosion risk in the Strathbogie Ranges and along the Shire's waterways.

The Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy identifies a range of land and water management issues and strategies which are relevant to the Shire and the wider region. They include:

- water quality particularly the build up of salinity and nutrients
- flooding and floodplain management
- competing demands on water in catchments
- vegetation loss and maintenance of habitat and biodiversity
- pest plant and animal control

The long term sustainable use and development of the Shire's natural resource base is critical to the prosperity of rural townships and communities. Increasing attention is being given to the management of the quality and quantity of the Shire's water resources. These issues are also critical for the region's economy particularly with downstream water users, both rural and industrial.

Increasingly attention will be given to managing the capacity of each sub-catchment to supply sufficient water to meet demands for environmental flows, stock and domestic supplies as well as new agricultural and horticultural enterprises.

Biodiversity

Strathbogrie Shire contains important native flora and fauna including significant examples of a number of depleted vegetation types such as grassy woodland and box-ironbark forest. The Shire has Victoria's largest population of Grey-crowned Babblers and important populations of the threatened Squirrel Glider, Tuan, Bush Stone-curlew and the State's most important population of the nationally endangered Trout Cod.

The Grey-Crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) is listed as endangered on the Conservation Status in Victoria and Australia. The Grey-crowned Babbler is located at several sites along roadside reserves between Euroa and Violet Town.

Protecting and conserving biodiversity through native vegetation retention and provision of habitats is being achieved through the development of a pilot project to protect remnant native vegetation that supports the Grey Crowned Babbler and other vulnerable and endangered species. The Shire's Roadside Management Plan is also evidence of the Shire's commitment to maintaining diversity of native vegetation and animals.

The Goulburn Broken Native Vegetation Management Strategy will assist Council in identify areas where native vegetation has been depleted and provide goals for community groups and land managers to protect remnant vegetation and encourage revegetation where necessary.

Landscape

The landscape character of resources such as the Box-Ironbark forests, Strathbogrie Ranges and the Nagambie Lakes are significant local and regional assets. The Strathbogrie Ranges in particular are an outstanding landscape feature including the hill faces which are visibly prominent from the Hume Freeway. These need to be protected from incompatible land use and developments.

Natural Hazard

Wildfire threat is associated with heavily vegetated and steep areas within the Shire particularly the Strathbogrie Ranges.

Flooding has been a major issue in Euroa, while Avenel and Violet Town have experienced localised flooding. Euroa has undertaken a Floodplain Management Study and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority is currently preparing a flood management plan for Violet Town.

The Planning Scheme will implement the recommendations of these Studies as they are completed. Sheet flooding occurs across the flat plains between the Strathbogrie Ranges and the Goulburn River. Council has implemented a flood warning system in the catchments of the Sevens Creek and Castle Creek above the Township of Euroa and is investigating the same technology for the Honey Suckle Creek catchment above Violet Town.

Cultural Heritage

The Shire's built heritage is based on the historical and architectural features of the towns particularly Euroa and Avenel and the rural areas. Important features include historic wineries and bridges across the Goulburn River. The Shire has a legacy of many important heritage structures and places. While most of the heritage assets are listed or classified a fully comprehensive evaluation of the condition and significance of the Shire's heritage assets has yet to be prepared. The ongoing maintenance of heritage assets can add substantial investment into the local economy particularly through the promotion and development of tourism.

Council is seeking funding to upgrade the three heritage classified wooden bridges south of Nagambie and the construction of a walking-cycle track along the Goulburn River. The Shire has also committed itself to a heritage study to address the Shire's needs in 1999/2000.

